



JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF
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NEWS RELEASE

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Trial Courts Host 'Adoption Saturdays' to Find Safe, Permanent Homes for Foster Children

Special Events Set This Weekend Celebrate Adoption and Permanency Month in California

San Francisco—California trial courts are hosting special events this Saturday, November 18, to encourage adoptions of foster children in their communities, as part of Court Adoption and Permanency Month.

The Judicial Council of California declared November as Court Adoption and Permanency Month to focus attention on the growing need for adoption and other permanency programs in California, where 29,000 children enter foster care each year. November was selected to coincide with national efforts during the same month.

State and national programs focus on finding foster children safe and permanent homes and meaningful lifelong connections with caring adults. National estimates show that foster youth without intervention will experience a greater frequency of homelessness, addiction, early pregnancy, incarceration, and future involvement with the child protective services than the general population.

Upcoming programs include Adoption Saturdays and other events to educate the community on the adoption process and on what permanency means to foster children and youth. Local events include:

Adoption Saturday, November 18th

- The Superior Court of Los Angeles County, originator of the Adoption Saturday movement both in California and nationally, will conduct its 23rd Adoption Saturday this weekend. More than 7,000 adoptions have been completed since April 1998.
- The Superior Court of Alameda County will celebrate its sixth Annual Adoption Saturday in conjunction with the county's Social

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Services Department. More than 500 children have been adopted at the court during the last 7 years, with at least 76 children expected to be adopted this Saturday.

- The Superior Court of San Bernardino County, Juvenile District, and the Department of Social Services will celebrate their ninth year of Adoption Saturday, and anticipate that approximately 75 children will be adopted.
- The Superior Court of Sacramento County will hold its third annual call-out ceremony to remember the children who are still waiting for adoptive parents on Saturday.
- The Superior Court of Santa Clara will celebrate its Adoption Day on Friday, November 17, where the court hopes to finalize placement of as many as 60 children into adoptive homes.
- The Bay Area Heart Gallery, a partnership of public and private agencies, is a “traveling” photo exhibit featuring children and youth in foster care who are in need of an adoptive home and permanency. Visit <http://www.bayareaheartgallery.com>.

Reaching Out to Trial Courts

A manual to guide trial courts in developing effective programs in these areas has been developed by the Center for the Families, Children & the Courts, of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC).

Since its first declaration of Court Adoption and Permanency Month in 1999, the AOC has collected information about adoption and permanency in a manual for the courts, county agencies and other community service providers to help plan events and provide resources. This year the guide has been redesigned to include a greater focus on what permanency means to children in care and the necessity of engaging youth in all aspects of finding connections and permanency.

For more information, the guide is available on the Center for Families, Children & the Courts Web site at:

<http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc/programs/description/AdoptPermGuide.htm>.

The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.



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FACT SHEET

November 2006

Adoption and Permanency: Statistics of Children in Care

The following statistics provide an overview of the status of children in California.

Children in California:¹

- Each year in California nearly 500,000 reports are made of child abuse and neglect and some 29,000 children enter foster care.
- 79,000 children in California live apart from their families in child-welfare supervised out-of-home care.
- 32 percent of the children in foster care in California have been away from their families in out-of-home care for four or more years.
- Of the nearly 36,000 children leaving foster care between January and December 2005, 54 percent were reunited with their families and 21 percent were adopted.

The Meaning of Permanency

The legal community uses the term “permanency” to mean efforts to restore a sense of safety and security to youth who are not able to live in their own homes. The term can include adoption, maintaining important relationships with others, and the personal meaning of permanency that a foster child may have.

- **Legal Permanent Plans** are defined as any one of the following: family reunification–return home; adoption by relative or other; guardianship; or placement with an identified person, with the specific goal of any of the options above.
- **Foster Youth Define Permanency** *It is not a process, a plan, or a placement; it is a committed relationship intended to last a lifetime.*

¹ Source: Multiple reports retrieved from the University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research Web site, <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports> (July 2006).

- **Planning for Permanency** should begin at the time the child enters care, be youth-driven, family-focused, culturally competent, continuous, and approached with the highest degree of urgency.²
- **Efforts are now required** that help maintain a child's relationship with important individuals, so that no child leaves foster care without a lifelong connection to a committed adult.

² National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning/Hunter College School of Social Work, Casey Family Services, *Permanency for Young People: Framework* (Aug. 10, 2004).